

March 24, 2015

Dear Representative:

The Committee for Education Funding (CEF), a coalition of 116 national education associations and institutions representing early learning to postgraduate education, **writes to express our strong opposition to H. Con. Res. 27, the Fiscal Year (FY) 2016 Budget Resolution.**

This budget will cause irreparable harm to children, students, schools, libraries, museums and colleges and will undermine job creation, economic growth and global competitiveness by:

- Locking in the FY 2016 sequester level cap for nondefense discretionary (NDD) spending. Since the FY 16 sequester cap is virtually the same as the FY 15 cap, failing to raise it will make it virtually impossible to provide additional needed investments in education from early learning through higher education.
- Drastically cutting funding for NDD programs below the sequester caps starting in FY 2017, for a total cut of \$759 billion (-13.8%). While cutting NDD spending the Budget increases defense spending by \$387 billion above the caps, violating the principle established in the Budget Control Act and the Bipartisan Budget Act that defense and nondefense spending should be treated with parity. Indeed, the president of the Aerospace Industries Association said in May 2014, “the aerospace and defense industry knows the education, health, job training, and research programs that NDD-United champions in addition to benefitting society, bolster our industrial base.”
- Freezing the maximum Pell grant for ten years.
- Eliminating \$90 billion in mandatory funding for Pell grants, which will likely chop the Pell maximum award from \$5,775 to \$4,860 – a cut of \$915 or 15.8 percent.
- Increasing student indebtedness by \$62 billion by eliminating the in-school interest subsidy for need-based student loans, restricting income-based repayment, and eliminating public service loan forgiveness. For an undergraduate student who borrows the maximum \$23,000, his/her debt will increase by \$4,900 (+16%) over 10 years.
- Further restricting eligibility for need-based student aid by repealing improvements enacted by Congress in 2007. These changes will require families to pay more of their income toward college costs and make it more difficult for moderate-income students to qualify for the maximum Pell grant.
- Eliminating federal funding for libraries and museums.

While the Budget adheres to the NDD cap for FY 2016, in FY 2017 alone it cuts NDD spending by \$44 billion (-8.7%) below the sequester level. It then deepens these cuts for the succeeding eight years. Indeed, the level of funding in FY 2025 would be 19.1 percent below the sequester level.

If these discretionary cuts were applied equally to all agencies, the Department of Education would be cut by \$5.84 billion in FY 2017 and Head Start by an additional \$745 million.

The cuts to NDD programs will actually be even worse, since the budget assumes the shift of \$7 billion in Pell grant mandatory funding in FY 2017 to this drastically reduced NDD pool of funds.

This budget will result in substantial cuts to critical programs including Title I aid to high-poverty schools; IDEA funds for students with disabilities; Impact Aid; teacher quality grants; after-school programs; magnet school aid; English

Language Acquisition grants; career, technical and adult education; campus-based student aid; aid to minority-serving institutions; TRIO and GEAR UP.

These unprecedented and senseless cuts will:

- move our nation backwards in efforts to close achievement gaps, improve overall student success, and increase high school graduation, college access and college completion rates;
- make postsecondary education more expensive for low- and middle-income families; and,
- stifle innovation by cuts to scientific research.

The need to increase the federal investment in education has never been greater. Jobs and the economy are directly linked to such investments. Both unemployment rates and lifetime earnings are closely connected to levels of education attainment.

CEF supports the following elements of the budget resolution to be offered by Rep. Van Hollen as it rejects these harmful cuts to education programs, and includes:

- funds for a new early childhood initiative to provide access to a high-quality preschool for all four-year-olds from low- and moderate-income families;
- increased investments for elementary and secondary education, including increases for key programs such as Title I, special education, career and technical education, and STEM education;
- includes policy in favor of legislation that puts the government on a path to meet its commitment to fund 40 percent of the average per pupil cost of providing special education;
- significant funding for new initiatives to make college affordable and increase completion;
- a permanent extension and improvement of the American Opportunity Tax Credit; and
- a reserve fund for deficit-neutral legislation to reauthorize the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self Determination Act.

Solving our nation's fiscal situation and reducing the debt can't and won't happen simply by slashing education and other nondefense discretionary spending. **We urge you to reject H. Con. Res 27 and instead adopt a Budget Resolution that invests in education and our nation's future.**

Sincerely,

Noelle Ellerson

President

Joel Packer

Executive Director